Cold Weather Plan launch

1 November 2012 - The Met Office, Department of Health and Health Protection Agency have launched this winter's plans to keep people warm and healthy in the cold weather this winter.

The Met Office, Department of Health, and Health Protection Agency have launched the Cold Weather plan for England 2012 which aims to prepare for, alert people to and prevent the major avoidable effects on health during periods of severe cold in England.

The Cold Weather Plan, which has run successfully since 2011, has been developed by the Department of Health, Met Office and Health Protection Agency, and supported by AgeUK. The purpose of the Cold Weather Plan is to help raise awareness of the dangers of cold weather on health with both the general public and professionals alike. It spells out what preparations both individuals and organisations could make to reduce health risks and includes specific measures to protect at-risk groups.

John Hirst, Chief Executive of the Met Office, said: "With the success of last year's Plan, the Met Office is proud to be able to support the Department of Health and the Health Protection Agency once again with their winter preparedness. These alerts will put everyone in a better position to respond to forecasts of severe weather and inform those who are most at risk from winter weather what they can do to keep well."

The Cold Weather Plan will be supported again this year by the Met Office Cold Weather Alert Service, which notifies frontline staff across the health, social care, Community and Voluntary sectors, and AgeUK, as well as the general public across England, when cold weather could impact on peoples' health.

Although winter weather and snow can be fun, they are also associated with an increase in illnesses and injuries. Severe cold weather can be particularly dangerous for vulnerable groups such as older people and those with serious illnesses.

Met Office figures show that the winter of 2010/11 saw the coldest December in 100 years. Some areas saw temperatures fall as low as -10 and -20 °C overnight. Winter 2011/12 was milder but there were several cold snaps, notably at the start of February 2012.

Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, said, "Older people and those with long term conditions are particularly vulnerable to the cold and working with the Met Office is a key part of our winter strategy to help protect them.

"Met Office intelligence on the weather helps the NHS plan for winter pressures so together we can help prevent the illnesses, injuries and even deaths that cold weather can cause. The NHS will be there and as always has plans in place to help deal with winter related health problems."

The Met Office Cold Weather Alert Service runs from 1 November 2012 to 31 March 2013 and has five alert levels that depend on the severity of conditions. Together, the plan and alerts aim to prepare, alert and prevent the effects of winter weather on people's health by helping keep people well.

Further details of how to prepare and reduce the effects of extreme weather conditions on your health can be found on our website.

Contact information

Met Office Press Office: **+44 (0)1392 886655**

E-mail: Press Office

Met Office Customer Centre: **01392 885680**

If you're outside the UK: **+44 1392 885680**

Last updated: 5 November 2012